REPORT

OF THE

Superintending School Committee

OF

AMHERST, N. H.,

March, 1860.

In presenting their report to the Town, the School Committee take pleasure in congratulating the citizens upon the generally prosperous condition of the Schools during the past year. Competent and judicious teachers have been employed, who have, under a due sense of their responsibility, honored their profession by devoting their talents and their unwearied energies to the work of developing the faculties of those committed to their charge. The scholars generally, it is believed, have answered the expectations of their friends, by making a good improvement of their privileges. Whether they have accomplished as much or more than in former years, the Committee are not prepared to say, the field being to them new. But few instances of departure from propriety of deportment have come to the knowledge of the Committee. But very few have placed themselves in that most unfortunate position of resistance to the teacher's authority.

The Registers show too great a want of punctuality in attendance, in some of the schools. This evil can be greatly remedied by proper care on the part of parents and scholars although instances of tardiness and absence are sometimes unavoidable.

The Committee have been gratified by the presence of many of the parents and friends at the closing examinations. In some instances the citizens have turned out almost *en masse*. These visits have great influence on the general bearing and prosperity of the schools.

The methods adopted by the teachers in governing and instructing their pupils, have generally commended themselves to

the Committee as wise and judicious. It has been noticeable that those teachers have succeeded best in government, who have united *firmness* with *mildness*. The idea formerly prevailed with many teachers, that in order to govern well, they must be armed with a heavy ferule and a raw hide, or something akin to it, and put on a stern, terrific air; and thus by inspiring their subjects with terror, keep them in subjection. Such ideas are worthy of more barbarous ages than the present. Appeals to the higher attributes of childhood,—their manhood, reputation, self-respect, regard for right, will be more salutary, and in the end more effectual in restraining them from wayward paths, than to let down upon their devoted heads bolts of wrath and fury. Teachers must judge for themselves when severe measures become necessary.

In imparting instruction, some of the teachers at least, did not confine themselves to the bare question and answer of the text-book, but adduced examples and drew illustrations from other fruitful sources, which tended to deepen and fix the impression on the mind. They saw that the true end of education was not gained by merely filling the heads of scholars with the contents of book after book, in endless variety. The scholar must learn to think, to judge, to investigate. This is the *practical* part of education,—that which qualifies for the duties and responsibilities of after life.

That there are evils connected with our schools that need to be corrected, must be obvious to all. We have alluded to the want of punctuality in attendance at school, and need not dwell upon it. Another evil is a great variety of text-books upon the same subjects. For instance, some four or five series of Readers are used, when one series would be sufficient. The Committee have recommended *Town's Progressive Series*, as a substitute for those now in use.

With these broken preliminary remarks, the Committee present the following statements of the respective schools.

District No. 1, having adopted the Somersworth Act, is reported by its own Committee.

District No, 1, Graded School. *Primary Department*, taught by Miss Elizabeth C. Kendall, of Mont Vernon. Whole number of weeks kept 22, with an intermission; wages $18 per month, including board; whole number of scholars, 49; average attendance, 37. This school is composed of the youngest class of

scholars, and by diligence and persevering industry the teacher succeeded well in gaining their affections. The advancement of the classes was regular, and the success good.

Intermediate School, taught by Miss Hattie Richardson, of Lyndeborough. Whole number of weeks, 20; number of scholars 45; average attendance, 37; wages, $19 per month, including board. A strict watch and a steady hand is required in a school composed of scholars of the age of those attending this department. The teacher had a happy faculty of management, and with her unremitted care and attention, succeeded well. Unfortunately she was taken sick, and the school closed two weeks sooner than was intended.

The High School was taught by Mr. George Hardy, a member of the Senior class of Dartmouth College. Whole no. of weeks, 20, with a vacation; wages, $45 per month, including board; no. of scholars, 40: average attendance, 34. The qualifications of the instructor are superior. His easy and familiar manner, connected with his zeal and perseverance, were such as to overcome all obstacles, and scholars could scarcely remain within the walls of the school room without adding something to their stock of knowledge.

On the whole, the Committee think they have been fortunate in the selection of the teachers, that the money of the district has been expended well, and that the advancement of the scholars in their various studies affords an ample remuneration.

At the final conclusion of the schools there was a manifest improvement in the appearance and conduct of the scholars. For most of the time during the last term of the High School, an evening each week had been devoted to declamation, dialogues, discussions, and the art of speaking; and the members of this school, composed of that class of youth just entering upon years of discretion, appeared to have assumed a tone of manliness, indicative of a degree of improvement in that direction not before apparent. An addition of apparatus was made during the last term, by voluntary subscription, to the amount of twenty-five dollars.

P. DODGE,
B. B. DAVID,
CHARLES RICHARDSON,
} Superintending Committee of Dist. No 1.

District No. 2. *Summer term* was taught by Miss Abbie F. Crosby, of Lowell, Mass. Length of the term, 8 weeks; whole number of scholars, 16; average attendance, 11 3-4; wages per month, including board, $15.

Winter term, taught by Miss Susan R. Patch. Length of term 10 weeks; whole number of scholars, 27; average attendance, 22; wages of teacher per month, including board, $21.

Perhaps the interest felt by the parents here in their children at school is not unparalleled. There is no record of a visit paid by any one of them in either term, and the house is indecent.—Yet both teachers did something. Miss Crosby is approved by the Committee, Miss Patch commended elsewhere.

District No. 3. *Summer term*, taught by Miss Maria A. Caldwell. Length of school, 8 weeks; whole number of scholars, 12; average number, 10; wages of teacher per month, including board, $15. We hardly need say more of this school than that Miss Caldwell taught it. Her method of teaching is clear, inductive and thorough. That must be a dull scholar who could not make good progress under the advantages here afforded. The examination showed that the teacher had been faithful and the scholars industrious. They could not only give answers correctly and solve problems, but could give *reasons* for their answers.

Winter term, under the continued instruction of Miss Caldwell. Length of term, 12 weeks; whole number of scholars, 13; average attendance, a fraction over 11; wages, $20 per month, including board. The school this term was marked by the same characteristics as was the previous term. The wisdom of continuing the same instruction was manifest. It was most to be regretted that a larger number of scholars could not have enjoyed the advantages of so good a school.

The interior of the school house needs to be re-constructed. It could be made much more cheerful, and better in all respects, without great expense.

District No. 4. *Summer term* taught by Miss Sophia E. Phelps. Length of the term, 10 1-2 weeks; whole number of scholars, 14; average number, 11 3-4; wages of teacher, $14 a month, including board. Miss Phelps has earned a good reputation as a teacher. By her mild and winning manner, she secures the esteem of her pupils and inspires in them a commendable de-

gree of enthusiasm. The school appeared finely at the examination, the answers to the questions being promptly and understandingly given, and generally so as to be heard. The reading was very good.

Winter term taught by Miss Sophia E. Phelps. Length of term, 10 weeks; whole number of scholars, 19; average attendance, 16; wages of teacher a month, including board, $18,00.—It is well for a district to retain the services of the same teacher for successive terms. Each teacher has peculiar modes of inducing thought. When scholars understand these modes they stand upon vantage-ground which is worth the holding. We commend the policy of District No. 4, in this respect.

District No. 5. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Lucretia D. Campbell of Nashua. Length of term, 12 weeks; whole number of scholars, 22; average attendance, 19. Miss Campbell came to this place highly recommended, and the result of her labors here gave evidence that her recommendations had been justly bestowed. At the end of six weeks, the Committee were notified by the district agent that the closing examination was to be held about the middle of the following week. An examination was accordingly held. A large number of the parents of the school were present, and a strong feeling was manifested by nearly all against the the school's closing so abruptly. It was argued that the vote of the district had not been complied with in the amount of money appropriated for the summer school.—Before the meeting broke up it was decided that the school should continue several weeks longer, a short vacation intervening. The term was thus lengthened to 12 weeks. The scholars gave evidence at the examinations that they had been carefully taught in their studies, and well trained in their manners and general deportment.

Winter School, taught by Miss Lucretia D. Campbell. Length of the term, 9 1-2 weeks; whole number of scholars, 29; average attendance, 24; wages of teacher a month, including board, $21,00. The people here are alive. The school-room was crowded at examination, and the register shows a number of visitations during the term. Miss Campbell pleased us by attention to matters too often neglected. The order of nature is, 1st—Rudiments. Our scholars should know the geography of New Hampshire before they do that of Siam.

District No. 6. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Charlotte M. Nichols of Merrimack. Length of of school, 9 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 15 ; average attendance, 13 ; wages of teacher per month, exclusive of board, $9,00 ; the families furnishing board. The district were very fortunate in securing the services of Miss Nichols. In a quiet manner, without any attempt at mere display, she led her pupils at will, inspiring them with a love of knowledge, and guiding them in its pleasant paths. This school has produced and still contains some excellent scholars.—The closing examination, which was witnessed by a goodly number of friends, was of a high order.

Winter School, taught by Mr. Altamont Thompson of East Lempster. Length of term, 8 weeks and 2 days ; whole number of scholars, 15 ; average attendance, a fraction over 14 ; wages of teacher per month, including board, $32,50 In the business of teaching, Mr. Thompson is a workman who needs not be ashamed. The order was excellent, and everything combined to make the school profitable. In point of punctuality of attendance this must be considered the *banner* school of the town during the winter term. There was but one case of tardiness, and 7 of the 15 scholars were neither absent or tardy in a single instance.—The examination showed that the time had been well spent.

District No. 7. *Summer term*, taught by Miss Ellen M. Holbrook, Length of term, 12 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 14 ; average attendance, 10 1-2 ; wages of teacher per month, $18.—This was Miss Holbrook's first attempt at teaching, which fact should be duly considered in estimating her relative merit. She has made a fair beginning, and further experience in the employment will make more conspicuous those indispensable good qualities in a teacher which she evidently possesses. The school was composed of quite small scholars, and of course not very far advanced, yet they promised well, and they will not be found behind others of similar ages. The closing examination was respectable.

Winter term, taught by Miss Nancie W. McCluer. Length of the term, 12 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 14 ; average attendance, 10 1-2 ; wages of teacher a month, including board, $18. A small school but a pleasant one. The house itself is attractive. Sun can come in upon cold days, and the teacher can be heard without shouting upon windy ones. Scholars think quickly in such quarters, and have inducements to study. We wish we could write oftener, as we do here,—teacher, and parents and scholars have done well.

District No. 8. *Summer term* taught by Miss Susan R. Patch. Length of school, 8 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 18 ; average number, 14 ; wages of teacher, including board, $14 a month.— Though this has not been regarded as a forward school, still there does not seem to be any lack of capacity or talent, and some of the pupils seemed to be aiming at respectability as scholars. On the whole there was evidence of progress. Miss Patch, with good intellectual endowments, judgment and tact, takes a high rank as a teacher.

Winter term, taught by Mr. William H. Clark, of Hancock.— Length of term, 10 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 23 ; average number, 18 2-3 ; wages of teacher a month, including board, $23. Mr. Clark has made a fair beginning as a teacher. He at first found a considerable dullness in a portion of his pupils, which it was hard to remove. There was a gradual change however for the better during the term. At the closing examination there was some very good reading, several classes recited with a good degree of promptness, and the general deportment of the scholars was good.

District No. 9. *Summer term*, taught by Miss Nancie W. McCluer. Length of the term, 8 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 16 ; average attendance, 12 1-2 ; wages of teacher a month, including board, $14.

A bad school house in this district, ill-arranged and ill-furnished, and, the natural consequence, a backward school. Nevertheless some progress was made, and the scholars at examination appeared quiet and orderly.

Miss McCluer taught the Winter school in No. 7.

District No. 10. *Summer term*, taught by Miss Clara K. Read, of Merrimack. Length of term, 8 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 11 ; average number, 10 ; wages of teacher a month, exclusive of board, $8. The number of scholars in this school, as will be seen, is quite small, and, there being quite a difference in their ages, they are not easily classed. They however manifested a commendable degree of diligence in study, and their deportment was for the most part good. The exercises of the examination were well sustained, and evident progress has been made, for which both teacher and scholars should receive due credit. The scholars in this district will not suffer in comparison with those of other districts favored with longer schools.

Winter term, taught by Miss Addie E. Shedd, of Merrimack.—Length of term, 8 weeks; whole number of scholars, 10; average number, 8 1-2; wages of teacher a month, exclusive of board, $8, This school was Miss Shedd's first teaching, and she evidently aimed to discharge her duties with honor to herself, and satisfactory to the friends of the school. The experience of the term will be of use in her future labors in the same calling. From some cause there was too little enthusiasm among the scholars in their studies, and their progress was not so perceptible on this account.

DISTRICTS Nos. 11, 12 and 13. Scholars in these districts attend school in Bedford and Merrimack.

DISTRICT No. 14. *Summer term*, taught by Miss A. E. Upton. Length of the term, 8 weeks; whole number of scholars, 12; average attendance, 10; wages of teacher a month, including board, $8. Miss Upton conducts well in the school room. She does not seem to tire the scholars in governing them. We did not see the school at its close.

Winter term, taught by Miss Georgia D. Giles, of Wilton.—Length of the term, 9 weeks; whole number of scholars, 26; average attendance, 23; wages of teacher a month, including board, $20. A good school. The attendance of a number of large scholars was an advantage which the teacher improved. We will speak of one fault—it is in other schools—too rapid reading.—When we read best, mind outruns speech. We are always in advance of our audience. Inversion involves failure.

The great want of our schools is certain knowledge. It is a pet mistake to be always hurrying. So we find scholars in interest when they should be in fractions. "How much of the book has the class read this term?" ws ask of teachers. "Through the book," is the answer. Or, perhaps, "through the book, and partly through it again." We select a passage. 'Please tell us what that means,' to the reader. No answer, or a shake of the head, or an, "I dont know, sir." So it is, through the list, with exceptions, just enough to prove the rule. Pray, what's the use of such shoal culture?—We protest against it.

J W. PILLSBURY, } SUPERINTENDING
C. H. WALLACE, } COMMITTEE.